

PRESS RELEASE



Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure

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Chairman Don Young's Statement From Today's Hearing On British Petroleum Pipeline Problems

Washington, D.C. - The following is U.S. Rep. Don Young's (R-Alaska) opening statement from today's hearing on the operation of low pressure liquid pipelines in the Prudhoe Bay oil field, like the ones operated by British Petroleum that were found to be experiencing severe corrosion problems.

Additional information relating to today's hearing can be accessed at the Committee's website: www.house.gov/transportation

Today the Committee is conducting an oversight hearing on the operation of low stress pipelines on the North Slope of Alaska. As Congressman for all of Alaska, I take a back seat to no one in caring about my state, its workers and its environment.

In March of this year there was a release of approximately 5,000 barrels in the western operating area of the North Slope, a British Petroleum (BP) production area. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) immediately sent teams to the North Slope.

PHMSA issued corrective action orders to BP following that release which required BP to immediately begin to inspect all of its other low stress pipelines on the North Slope. This process began in the spring and continued all summer.

On July 19th, this Committee reported out by voice vote the "Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2006". In that bill, we required PHMSA to regulate low stress pipelines nationwide. We defined low stress pipelines in the bill to include the pipeline on the North Slope that was involved in the release of oil in March.

The bill requires PHMSA to complete the low stress pipeline rule within one year.

In August of 2006, in conjunction with inspections which PHMSA ordered to be conducted, BP detected a release of approximately 25 barrels of oil on another low stress pipeline, this time in the eastern operating area. As was done with regard to the release that occurred in March, the leak was immediately cleaned up and PHMSA ordered repairs to be done immediately.

Last week, PHMSA announced a notice of a proposed new rule to regulate low-stress pipelines. This is the same rule making requirement called for by this Committee in the bill we reported in July. The vote of the Committee occurred before the August release of 25 barrels, but after the March release of 5,000 barrels.

This time line is important to put things in context. The context is that PHMSA did its job – and continues to do its job.

BP is, and will continue to be held accountable for its future North Slope operations by PHMSA and other federal agencies with enforcement authority. That is how the law is supposed to work.

PHMSA must do their job in keeping these pipelines safe, and I support their efforts.

BP has a job to do on the North Slope and I will insist that they do it correctly.

The recent release of oil on the North Slope concerns me because the oil that we produce in Alaska provides energy for the entire nation. I want our oil delivered to its destination safely, without delay and without harm to the environment.

I want to know what steps are being taken by BP to make sure this doesn't happen again.

I am not here today to beat a dead horse on who knew what and when did they know it. Investigations are being conducted and all appropriate actions should be taken when those investigations are complete.

My interest is in getting Alaskan oil delivered safely, without delay and without harm to the environment.

**For additional information, access the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee website at:
www.house.gov/transportation**

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